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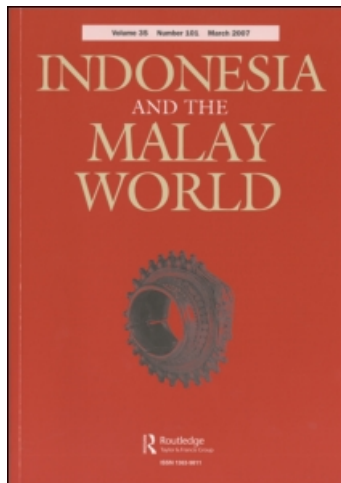
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ISLAMIC INFLUENCES ON URBAN FORM IN SUMATRA IN THE SEVENTEENTH TO NINETEENTH CENTURIES CE

FREEK COLOMBIJN¹

Urban space is a social product (Lefebvre 1974). People give cities their physical form. Conversely, human behaviour is to some extent structured by the urban form. The built environment restricts certain patterns of behaviour and stimulates other patterns. As Winston Churchill said when he re-opened the House of Commons after World War II: 'We shape our buildings and then they shape us' (quoted in Phillips 1996: 462). Urban form is important because of the physical restrictions and stimuli and urban places can be the bearers of important symbolic meanings (Castells 1975; Lefebvre 1974; Nas, 1993).

Political leaders have a more than average interest in urban shapes. One important concern for them is that they want to express their hegemony symbolically and to communicate their power position to their subjects, allies or adversaries. Where no hegemonic power exists, various competing groups may wish to show off their presence in the city, in the same way as graffiti artists leave their 'tags' throughout the city without administering the city. A recent example of a leader enjoying hegemonic power is the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir, who built a new administrative centre, Putrajaya, on the fringe of Kuala Lumpur. The architecture of Putrajaya invokes the image of a modern and Muslim nation; the design of the Prime Minister's office and residence strongly suggests that Mahathir was not a 'mere' Prime Minister but an Islamic ruler, a Sultan. An example of a city where different groups compete for control, without any one getting the upper hand, is provided by Kota Ambon, the capital of the Moluccas. The most important symbolic graffiti tags of Christian and Muslim gangs are, respectively, the Maranatha Church and the al-Fatah Mosque, which are separated by a neutral, 'no-man's' street ironically called Gaza Street.² Both groups also make literal tags, in the form of insulting slogans chalked on mosques and churches.

When political power changes, it is probable that urban form and urban symbolism will be changed as well. Central Javanese royal centres serve as an example in this respect. The layout of pre-Islamic princely capitals reflected a *mandala*-like conception of the society with a pattern of streets radiating in the main directions of the compass, and a number of concentric circles centred on the ruler's palace, *keraton* or *kraton*, at the central square, *alun-alun*. When these rulers became Muslim, a mosque was added to the *alun-alun*, reinforcing the centrality of the ruler. Later, in at least one case, the Dutch colonial

¹Research in the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia was financed by the Netherlands Foundation for Research in the Tropics (WOTRO) and the KITLV. I am grateful to Elizabeth Lambourn and many others who have suggested improvements for this article.

²The meaning of the nickname is clear, although Jalan Gaza is a misnomer, as the Ambonese must have had the divided city of Jerusalem in mind.

power deliberately built a street that cut the *alun-alun* of Yogyakarta into two in order to disrupt the spatial configuration that symbolised and shored up Javanese royal power. The cosmological pattern was further desecrated by lining this street with mundane shops. A comparable change was brought about in Bangkok which was founded in the 18th century as a sacred city with the 'city pillar', royal temple and Thung Phramen square as corners of a symbolic triangle. In the early 20th century the king built a new royal palace with an avenue connecting it to the old city centre; the new palace was built to symbolise the idea that only the monarch was able to bring modernity to the country. After the 1932 revolt, in which the aristocratic elite lost power to the bureaucratic elite, the royal palace became the parliament building and the palaces lining the connecting avenue were transformed into public buildings: shops, theatres and hotels. In the midst of the avenue the Democracy monument was erected (Evers and Korff 2000: 81–86).

The examples of Kuala Lumpur, Kota Ambon, Yogyakarta and Bangkok given above show that at least two important political processes can lead to the creation of urban symbols. Firstly, rulers give shape to urban form in order to express, and thus bolster, their power. Secondly, a new kind of political leadership will result in an adjustment of urban form to suit their new political needs. In this article I will examine these two processes of urban symbolism in early modern Sumatra. In particular, I will explore the impact of the rise of new Muslim rulers on urban form in Middle Sumatra between 1600 and 1870 CE.³

Islam played an important role in the legitimisation of rulers. Before the introduction of Islam, the Sumatran ideal of absolute kingship was legitimised by a Hindu-Buddhist ideology of sacred kingship. The basic notion in this concept was that welfare in the terrestrial world was attained by constituting a harmonious parallel between the terrestrial human world and the cosmos. The capital city on earth formed the magic centre of the empire, just as the universe was centred on Mount Meru, where the Gods dwelled. The kingdom lay around the centre in a series of concentric circles. Moving outwards the power of the ruler faded symbolically (Hall 1985: 5–9; Heine-Geldern 1942; Tambiah 1985: 252–67; Wolters 1999: 35, 58–67).

The sacred king lived on in Islamic states. Contradicting orthodox interpretations of Islam, after conversion, rulers continued to claim divine status (Gullick 1988: xiv). A court chronicle of Siak stated that the sultan was 'descended from [...] the gods of Heaven' (Goudie 1989: 127). The contradiction between the existence of a sultan (the Arab prefix for an independent ruler) and the sultan's polytheistic ancestry apparently worried neither the author of the Siak chronicle, nor the royal patron of the chronicle. Islam strengthened the ideology of kingship 'by depicting a Moslem ruler as "the Shadow of God Upon the Earth"' (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 53). The ruler was as much a moral as a political leader. If a ruler's decrees were in accordance with Muslim principles, divinity would be attracted to him and his realm (Johns 1993; Milner 1982: 113–14). The rulers re-invested part of their income to bolster their legitimacy. Various kings used their power and wealth to build a mosque and make their capital a centre for Islamic teaching. The court of a good king provided shelter for Islamic teachers from Java and, increasingly, the cradle of Islam, Arabia. Ideally a court also housed many *haji* (Andaya 1993: 241; Gommans 1995: 100–1; Matheson and Andaya 1982: 161; Woelders 1975: 238, 385–87).

³By 'Middle Sumatra' I refer to the present-day provinces of West Sumatra, Bengkulu, South Sumatra, Jambi and Riau. Place and period of this article have been determined by the fact that the data were collected for a research project on environmental change in Middle Sumatra, 1600–1870.

The urban layout in general, and the spatial impact of Islam in particular, depended partly on the local geography. Roughly four different kinds of town can be discerned in Middle Sumatra: on the eastern rivers, on the west coast, in the highlands, and on the islands in the Straits of Malacca. On the east coast, the swampy lowland tropical rainforest impeded regular overland traffic so that almost all transport was by river. Villages and towns developed at the confluences of rivers. Each river basin had one major port town, usually about 100 km inland, which was also the capital of the local ruler. In contrast to the east coast, there were no big rivers to direct trade on the west coast. A large number of small, undifferentiated ports lined the west coast. Over 40 ports were counted in the 17th century. The settlement pattern of the flat valley floors in the Minangkabau highlands consisted of many villages spread fairly evenly over the valleys, with roads leaving from the village in all directions. Some villages developed into a town with a market, but there were too many alternative roads bypassing the central places to allow any market town to develop into a political centre monopolising trade. The islands in the Malacca Straits were small and the ports were almost without hinterland. Inland transportation was more or less restricted to sailing up creeks. Towns developed when they attracted overseas trade, particularly in food. The successful ports in the straits quickly emerged as emporia, but if the international trade of a certain island collapsed, the port town was abandoned by most of its residents.

This article focuses on the evolution of three urban centres: Palembang, Padang and Tanjung Pinang. Where appropriate, brief information about other towns is added which shows that the three towns are typical for towns on the east coast, the west coast and the islands in the Straits of Malacca respectively. Unfortunately, there is no place in the Minangkabau highlands for which historical sources exist that can help to reconstruct the townscape in a comparably detailed way. The descriptions of Palembang, Padang and Tanjung Pinang give details of Islamic buildings and provide information about the development of the settlements as a whole. These morphological histories have a value in their own right. They form a baseline to assess fully the specific Islamic influence on urban form. They also provide information about the Dutch impact on urban form in the disruption of some Islamic transformations. The Dutch changes bring out the previous Islamic influences more sharply. In the last section the emic (indigenous) conceptions of 'urban' will be analysed, by exploring the contrast between town and village and the role of Islamic buildings to accentuate the difference. The conclusion will list the most important empirical generalisations drawn from the descriptions.

Urban form in the east coast of Sumatra

Except perhaps for Aceh, Palembang was the largest town in Sumatra in the 18th and 19th centuries. The spatial structure of Palembang was determined by the river Musi and the location of the sultan's palace. Palembang had an elongated form, with urban wards on both sides of the river. These were named Ilir and Ulu, followed by a number. According to William Marsden, who left Sumatra in 1779, the town extended for almost 15 km (eight miles) along both banks.⁴ Despite the size of the town, an early 19th century Dutch observer, J. Olivier, called Palembang not a real town but an extended 'townlet'

⁴A century later, Cornelissen, Van Hasselt and Snelleman (1882: 37) wrote that Palembang was two *paal* (3.7 km) long. However, I do not believe that this indicates that the town had contracted since the population did not decrease. The difference in size shows that no clear boundary could be drawn between urban and rural areas.

(*vlek*). He asserts that the local people reserve the word ‘town’ (*kota*) for the sultan’s palace (Olivier 1838: 63).

The sultan’s palace (*kraton*, also called *dalam*) was surrounded by a brick wall – 314 metres long by 188 metres wide and 9.4 metres (1000 × 600 × 30 feet) high. Numerous canons were mounted on the walls and the whole formed a strong defensive work. Behind the outer wall were smaller walls with several gates, which together formed a labyrinth. The wall was built in 1780 and it was said that the builder had been a European.⁵ In the middle of the *kraton* lay the sultan’s residence, made of a wood as hard as iron. A 1779 Dutch source quoted by the British, narrates that the sultan maintained a harem of wives and concubines in the *dalam* and the men allowed to enter as water carriers were ‘extraordinary’ in ‘their innocence or stupidity that there is no example of their ever having had intercourse with the women’.⁶ After the Dutch took the town by force in 1825 and exiled the last sultan, they made the *kraton* their headquarters and demolished part of it to build their own fortress (Forbes 1885: 259; Marsden 1811: 361; Olivier 1838: 63–65).

The *kraton* was situated on the left bank of the river Musi, upstream from all the other major buildings. The mosque, allegedly built around 1740, was adjacent to the *kraton*. It was an oblong building on stilts with glazed windows, pillars and a marble floor. The building materials came from various sacred places. In 1823 the mosque looked filthy and the roof leaked, but then ironically, spurred by the Dutch Resident, the local people restored it. Downstream from the palace lay a square with a hall where the sultan held public audience. In the same square heavy guns were kept under a shelter. The market was located further downstream and below that were the settlements of people from China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Java and other places (Cornelissen et al. 1882: 38; Marsden 1811: 361–62; Olivier 1838: 72; Radermacher 1824: 57–59; de Sturler 1843: 187).

This arrangement of the town meant that the sultan could always retreat to the highlands should danger threaten. It also ensured that foreign traders visiting the market would never come between the *kraton* and the safety of the hills. Conversely, people from the hinterland bringing their export goods to the market had to pass the palace and could easily be seen by the sultan. Furthermore, the sultan’s palace could not be defiled, in a symbolic rather than a sanitary sense, by domestic and human waste of the urbanites. There is possibly a Hindu-Buddhist origin for the appreciation of the upstream end of a settlement. In Hindu-Buddhist temples on Java, the side facing upriver (and the mountain) was decorated with favourable images of gods, nymphs, ascetics, and personifications of truth whereas the side facing downriver was decorated with unfavourable images such as demons and personifications of war or death (Klokke 1995).

When the sultans were still in power, the VOC or Dutch East India Company, was allowed to build a *factorij* (factory/a reinforced trading house) on the other side (the right bank) of the river Musi. However, it was stipulated that the walls had to be lower than the walls of the *kraton*, in order to make it easier to bombard the VOC factory from the *kraton* rather than vice versa. This must have been more symbolic than practical

⁵Another story holds that a European built the great mosque (Radermacher 1824: 57).

⁶Notes of the arrangement made by Lord Minto for the occupation and administration of Java, 7-10-1813 (draft), India Office Records and Library in London (IOR), Java Factory Records (JFR) 64, sheet 112. Note that the 1779 source predates the completion of the *kraton* in 1780. Radermacher (1824: 68) gives a slightly different account: all servants in the palace were women, except the water carriers, who were men from one particular area of the country, Blida.

because for a ballistic trajectory the vertical difference in height of the walls was in fact negligible compared to the horizontal distance between *kraton* and factory.

Behind the factory flowed the Sungai Aur and across this creek the VOC opened up new land, settled by Chinese and Malays. This kampung prospered and the residents provided the VOC with vegetables.⁷ At first, the Chinese were not allowed to live on the land and most lived on rafts. They were later permitted to live on the right bank of the Musi, the opposite side to where the sultan resided, and a number of Chinese built houses behind the VOC factory. The Chinese temple was also erected on the right bank. After the Dutch deposed the sultan in the early 19th century, a Chinese ward developed on the left bank. Nevertheless, as late as the 1880s there still existed a Chinese and a Malay row of rafts, on different sides of the river Musi. The Arab community lived in a ward of their own on land (Cornelissen et al. 1882: 38; Forbes 1885: 256; Olivier 1838: 68; de Sturler 1843: 195). The buildings of the Dutch colonial administration were also built on land. Underlining the dominance of Palembang in the region, the European buildings in Palembang were much better built than the colonial outposts in the interior of Sumatra.⁸ The *pasar* (market hall) was created after the Dutch occupied the city in 1821. Before that date, goods could be purchased in small shops (*warung*) and at the Chinese rafts. The market hall was built of brick, a material previously reserved for members of the royal house (Forbes 1885: 260; de Sturler 1843: 191).

Several royal graveyards were located in the vicinity of Palembang. One graveyard was at Lamabang, the old centre of the town. This site had been abandoned after the VOC destroyed the whole town including the royal palace in 1659 (Taal unpublished: 51–52). The Lamabang graves were on the left bank of the Musi, 1.6 km (one mile) below the 18th-century town. The royal graves were covered by cupolas and stood in a sacred grove, surrounded by a low wall. At the entrance, two *waringin* trees (*Ficus benjamina*) were grown into each other. Basil twigs were sold at the gate as small offerings. The graves were forbidden territory for Europeans (Radermacher 1824: 59). Another cluster of graves was situated at Bukit Seguntang, also known as Bukit Lama, five km up the Musi river. The site was allegedly the burial place of Iskandar Zulkarnain (Alexander the Great). People went there with basil twigs and a wish written in Arabic on a piece of wood to pray for help.⁹ Semi-wild squirrels lived in the trees and fed on the offerings (Cornelissen et al. 1882: 43–46; de Sturler 1843: 186–90; Wallace 1869: 133).¹⁰

A Hindu-Buddhist origin for the veneration of royal graveyards is uncertain. Hindu-Buddhist rulers were cremated not buried. However, kings were seen as incarnations of certain gods, with whom they were reunited after death. Thus, certain temples became associated with certain deceased rulers. Although they were not burial sites, the temples

⁷Memorie van Overgave [Memorandum on leaving office] from Joan de Heere to Isaac Mens, Palembang, 27-6-1763, Nationaal Archief (NA) in The Hague, Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) 3089, pp. 106–8; Memorie van Overgave from Aart Quirijn Palm to Dominicus Michel Barbier, Palembang 17-9-1806, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia in Jakarta (ANRI), Palembang 38-1.

⁸Staat van lands gebouwen [Condition of state buildings]; Appendix to Algemeen verslag [General report] Palembang 1856, ANRI, Palembang 63-7. No values are mentioned for buildings in Tebingtinggi because they were in an advanced state of dilapidation or had collapsed.

⁹The connection between Iskandar Zulkarnain's grave and Islamic prayers is somewhat remarkable because ordinary people believed that Iskandar was their original ruler, before the present Sultan's family, descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, replaced him. J.C. Reijnt, Overzicht van de residentie Palembang, 17-4-1826, ANRI, Palembang 70-2. This story suggests that the grave at Bukit Seguntang belonged to a non-Muslim.

¹⁰De Sturler (1843: 189) mentions the islet of Sabokingking as a graveyard of princes which was also venerated. This information is spurious as Sabokingking was not an island but a neighborhood on the left bank of the river.

functioned both as places of worship and as memorials to the deceased king. This sacred kingship also connected well with an older Austronesian tradition of ancestor worship (Marijke Klokke, personal communication). A connection between the temples for gods/incarnated kings on the one hand and royal tombs on the other hand is therefore conceivable, but warrants more evidence.

The Palembang layout appears to be common to all port towns on the east coast of Sumatra although the other towns were much smaller. For example, Palembang had 29,000 inhabitants in 1829 whereas Jambi, had only about 4,000 to 6,000 in 1823.¹¹ Data about layouts is available for the centres of Siak Sri Indrapura and Pekanbaru (both on the river Siak), Palalawan (on the river Kampar) and Jambi (on the river Batanghari) though only the latter can be described in any detail.¹²

Jambi shows both similarities and dissimilarities with the Palembang structure. Older western sources give a glimpse of Jambi in the 17th century. The earliest English and Dutch reports date from 1615. The town lay so low that it was inundated by 1.5 metres (five feet) during the wet season. The king's palace, however, stood on an elevated site called Tanah Pilih, 'the Chosen Land', and remained dry during even the wettest of monsoons (Wellan 1926: 355–58). The English and Dutch factories were initially built on the same bank of the river as the royal palace, possibly upstream of the palace (Wellan 1926: 356–58). The location of the European factories at Jambi is an important departure from the Palembang model. The ruler of Jambi must have been displeased by the situation as in 1630 he asked the Dutch to moor their ships downstream from Tanah Pilih. However the British and Dutch factories must have remained near the sultan's palace (*hof*) until at least 1679 when all three buildings were almost razed by the same fire. By 1700 at the latest the Europeans had moved to the other side of the river.¹³

On a 17th-century map a symbol indicating a built construction and the word *patterijen* are visible on the right bank, below the *paseban* or audience hall which must have been adjacent to the palace. The singular *patterij* refers to either battery or pottery (*batterij* and *potterij* in Dutch). Both interpretations make sense. A battery would have protected the town against invaders approaching upriver. By contrast, a pottery, as a source of industrial waste, would certainly have been located below the main settlement. The existence of a pottery, rather than a battery, is confirmed by the fact that in 1636 the ruler sold a brickyard to the English (Wellan 1926: 356).

We have no descriptions of Jambi during the 18th century. However, the Dutch resumed contacts with Jambi in the 19th century when sources of this period specifically state that the *kraton* at Jambi was on the right bank of the river, and not on the left bank as in Palembang. J.W. Boers recounts how in 1834, coming from the river mouth, he walked through the town to the royal palace (Boers 1850: 465–66). His walk clearly shows that the sultan lived at the upstream end of the town. The sultan's palace had a brick wall, against which he had ordered the building of an audience hall to receive Boers. Boers further mentions a market place for provisions.

¹¹Crooke 1826: 396, 405; Jaarlijksch verslag residentie Palembang over 1832 [Annual report of the residency of Palembang 1832], ANRI, Palembang 62-1.

¹²Dobbin 1983: 105; Netscher 1862: 369, 374–75; Berigten ingewonnen van de zendelingen naar Siak, 1840 [Inquiries obtained from messengers sent to Siak], ANRI, Sumatra's Westkust (SWK) 1.1.

¹³GM 11-12-1679, *Generale missiven* 4, 1971: 340; Memorie van Overgave from Jacob Bottendorp to Jacob Erbeveldt, Palembang 29-1-1700, ARA, VOC 1637, p. 42. See also the map vaguely dated as '17th century' reproduced in Wellan (1927).

Foreign traders here, predominantly Arabs, were required to live across the river from the palace, in Pecinan ward. Before 1858, when the Dutch forcibly took the town and razed the *kraton*, the Dutch representatives of the colonial state also lived on this side.¹⁴ After 1858 Sultan Taha withdrew to the upper reaches of the Batanghari and the Dutch placed Taha's uncle, Ahmad Nazarudin on the throne. The Dutch then built a fortress on the site of the former *kraton*, so returning to the left bank 150 years later. The period after 1858 also saw the arrival of Chinese communities in Jambi who settled on rafts moored below the fortress.¹⁵ Sultan Nazarudin did not reside in town but lived in a village upriver. During his occasional visits he preferred to stay on the left bank, at the upstream end of Pecinan, where he had his own dwelling next to the house of his Arab son-in-law, Wiro Kesumo (Locher-Scholten 1994: 125, 137–42; Veth 1882: kaart xi). An important detail of the Dutch attack in 1858 is that the residents on the right bank fled from the town, but the people living on the left bank stayed (Locher-Scholten 1994: 128, 142); this suggests that the two halves of the town lived more or less separate lives.

As one would expect, there was a mosque in Jambi but in 1823 it was in a neglected state. At the entrance was a defaced Hindu statue. Half a century later the mosque was still, or once again, dilapidated, but by this time it had three more Hindu statues.¹⁶ There are no records of cemeteries but royal graves were found 1,350 metres (about 1500 yards) downstream from the town. The tombs were carved and gilded and covered by a cupola (Crooke 1826: 395).

Urban form on the west coast

The towns on the west coast were small and as late as 1905 Padang was the only town on the coast (or in the highlands) with a population of more than 3,000 inhabitants. According to Joel Kahn, the figure was considerably lower until a railway was constructed (between 1887 and 1892) to serve these towns (Kahn 1993: 156). The ports on the west coast were under strong cultural influence from the highland villages and could hardly be called towns. This changed when the VOC built a fortress at Padang in 1666. Almost immediately after the establishment of the VOC trading-post the Chinese must have begun to settle there to engage in coastal trade. Padang was insignificant when the Dutch first settled there, but soon began to grow thanks to the VOC commercial activity and because the Dutch suppressed trade in other coastal towns (Dobbin 1983: 77–87).

Unlike the riverine towns on the east coast, Padang followed a predominantly European concept. It was situated a few kilometres up a small river, the river Arau. Large ships could not enter the river and anchored at its mouth, sheltering from the ocean winds behind Pulau Pisang. A warehouse was built on Pulau Pisang in 1763¹⁷ but we have more details about the construction of a mosque (*Maleise kerk*) on the island in 1742. The building was erected in brick and thus took time to construct. The only bricklayers in town who could carry out this work were the VOC servants. We are told that at the end of a day

¹⁴The *kraton* was protected by several fortified kampung downstream from the palace and a swamp to its rear (Locher-Scholten 1994: 128).

¹⁵No Chinese lived in Jambi in 1823 but they had reportedly lived there before (Crooke 1826: 396).

¹⁶[J.A.W. van Ophuijsen], Kort verslag der bevindingen gedurende zijn reis naar Djambie, Moeara Kompeh en Oeloe Djambie [Brief report of findings on a trip to Jambi, Muara Kumpeh, and Ulu Jambi], 13-11-1869 to 3-12-1869, ARA, Koloniën (Kol.) 1850–1900 3147, verbaal 2-11-1878, no. 7.

¹⁷GM 31-12-1763, ARA, VOC 3069, f. 1619r.

working for their Dutch employer, the bricklayers had sore legs and were reluctant to take on a private contract for a mosque.¹⁸

Padang was ruled by the British on two occasions, between 1781 and 1784, and again between 1795 and 1819. The report and map which the Resident, J. van Heemskerk, made to account for the surrender to the English in 1781, enabled E. Netscher to give a fair impression of Padang in the late 18th century (Netscher 1881). The three central places were the VOC fortress, the market and the mosque, which were on the right bank of the river Arau. The VOC fortress was about 1,250 metres (0.7 mile) inland and covered approximately one hectare. The location of the mosque is uncertain; according to oral tradition it was in Kampung Ganting on the landward side of the fort. Other buildings on the right bank were a church, the house of the captain of the Chinese, and 22 houses. On the left bank were more houses, a hospital and the godowns. The bush started directly behind the houses. In the swampy fields strewn with *nipah* (marsh-palm, *Nipa fruticans*) a few plots were cleared for agriculture (Netscher 1881: iii–iv, 6–17, appendix I).

Strategic reasons probably determined the location of the market place in relation to the fortress. Whereas the *kraton* in Palembang was located for retreat into the hinterland, at Padang, the escape route of the occupants of the fortification, in effect the VOC officials, was by sea. The idea was that indigenous traders from the highlands should not come between the fortress and the sea. Another advantage was that Minangkabau traders from the mountains had easier access to the market. Netscher does not mention the presence of indigenous wards although these must have existed around the town centre.

After their return to Padang in 1819, the Dutch began to develop a town that conformed to more western standards. More brick buildings were constructed, including a jail and a customs house. The administration had some *nipah* groves cut down and a number of drainage canals were laid out in the swampy parts to improve the sanitation. By 1835 most swamps had been reclaimed. New straight, gravelled roads with cross-roads were laid out by forced *corvée* labour provided by the Indonesians. A new square bearing the curious name Rome, was a military parade ground and discernible on an 1827 map.¹⁹ An obelisk, commemorating the Dutch Lieutenant Raaff, who had fought against the Padris, expressed Dutch hegemony.²⁰

Burial areas were located on the south bank of the Batang Arau, which was covered by grassland (*alang-alang*) and shrubs. The highest point was named Batu Bersurat, after a rock with engraved, illegible words. The tip of the south bank, a protruding peninsula, was called Monkey Mountain because of the presence of crab-eating macaques (*Cercopithecus cynomolgus*). Several regents, with the title Tuanku Panglima, were buried in a family grave, situated near the small bridge between the Monkey Mountain and the mainland. On certain days of the year, women offered food and white flags to the souls of the deceased. Another sacred grave, surrounded by a wall, was found north of Padang, at Bukit Nanggalo (Müller and Horner 1855: 2–3, 28–29, 34).

It is unclear to what extent Padang resembled other port towns on the west coast because information is scarce.

¹⁸Memorie van Overgave from G.F. Havermans to Christiaan Willem van der Feltsz, 28-1-1742, ANRI, SWK 5-1.

¹⁹Jaarlijks Verslag Sumatra's Westkust, 1819–1827, ANRI, SWK 125–3.

²⁰Like Padang, the British stronghold Bengkulu had its memorial statue, of the Englishman Parr (Olivier 1838: 5).

Urban form in the highlands

In the mountain valleys, the traditional settlement of the Minangkabau was the village (*nagari*) and the idea of a town was a foreign concept (Miksic 1989: 11). The locus of these *nagari* was the mosque and the *balai adat* (a council house for village leaders). These villages were larger than the small towns on the west coast (Müller and Horner 1855: 131, 133, 140) and could functionally be defined as towns. There were certainly major buildings. One of the biggest mosques built by the Padris was in Tabiantinggi. The roof consisted of five pointed tiers made from *areng* palm leaves. It rested on 64 pillars with the central pillar about 45 metres (150 feet) high. The doors and shutters were carved (Müller 1837: 21–22). Bonjol, the centre of the Padris, had two mosques, one in the centre and one on the western end of the village, built of the best timber (de Stuers 1850: II, 81).

The place that came closest to a town was Pagarruyung, the seat of the Minangkabau kings, although little is known of it. Raffles visited Pagarruyung after it had been burned to the ground for the third time. Whilst Pagarruyung was rebuilt after the first two fires it was abandoned after the third and Raffles found little more than *waringin* trees (Raffles 1830: 350–60). In better days, Thomas Dias reported, probably from hearsay, that there was a palace and that visitors had to go through three gates to enter it.²¹

In the early 19th century the Dutch army subjugated the Padang highlands. Villages where the Dutch quartered their troops soon assumed an urban appearance as brick houses were built and a multi-ethnic society emerged. Garrison towns developed into market places as they were accessible via military roads. They provided the demand for daily necessities and also required small numbers of artisans (Dobbin 1983: 152–53).

Urban form in the Straits of Malacca

The only detailed description of a town on one of the islands in the Malacca Straits is that of Tanjung Pinang, a composite settlement situated around a bay and small river on the west of Bintan island.²² A series of power changes explained its composite character. The Sultan of Johor first set up his court at Tanjung Pinang, then called Riau, from around 1680 to 1689. An usurper of the sultan's throne returned to Riau in 1709 but was driven off the island in 1719 by another pretender to the throne and was later murdered. Bugis forces installed the son of the deposed and murdered sultan as the new sultan with one of the Bugis leaders appointed as viceroy. Until 1784 when they were ousted by a Dutch naval attack, the Bugis viceroys were the de facto rulers of the kingdom, henceforth called Riau instead of Johor. At the end of the 18th century, only the Dutch and Chinese remained in Riau. In the 19th century the viceroys were permitted to return to Riau, but their power was greatly reduced by the Dutch colonial overlord (Bruyn Kops 1919: 618–20; Winstedt 1932: 46–72).

I know of no contemporary descriptions of the first settlement in the 1680s. However, a Dutch sailor, Herke Backer, writing in 1710 referred to it as a village called Riau Lama (Old Riau), which had become a centre for shipbuilding. Riau Lama lay outside the boom on starboard. Taking Backer's viewpoint from the deck of his ship, this must mean that the settlement lay on the south bank, west from the main village.²³

²¹Translaat rapport van Thomas Dias over zijn reis naar Siak, 18-11-1684, ARA, VOC 1407, f. 3021r, 3022v.

²²For two excellent 19th century maps, see Grensbeschrijving Riouw, n.d. [Description of the boundaries of Riau], ANRI, Riau 73-9; and Algemeen Verslag (AV) Riau 1827, Riau 60-1.

²³Rapport van stuurman Herke Backer over Riau [Report of navigation officer Herke Backer on Riau], 2-8-1710 to 17-9-1710, VOC, ARA 1795, Malacca, 535–537.

Backer further describes the situation one year after the Sultan of Johor returned to Riau. The entrance to the river was protected by a boom and a battery with seven guns. The main village (*negorij*) lay 400 metres (about 440 yards) behind the boom. The royal palace (*dalam*) was situated further upstream. Later, the Bugis viceroy probably occupied the same palace or built a new one nearby. Backer describes the existence of many houses on the north bank of the river where new houses were built every day. He does not give the ethnic background of the inhabitants but it is interesting that in the 19th century a Chinese kampung was located on this spot. If the people, who according to Backer were busy building houses, were Chinese, the site of their kampung corresponded with the pattern on the east coast of Sumatra as the Chinese had to live on the opposite side of the river to the ruler. Pulau Bayan at the mouth of the bay formed the final part of the town. The island protected the entrance to the town and was occupied by troops and fortified by a palisade and guns.²⁴

This situation changed after the Dutch expelled the Bugis viceroy and by the early 19th century, began to exert colonial administration in Riau. The old palace and royal graves of the viceregal family were abandoned and became a sanctuary overgrown with *jabi-jabi* trees (van der Putten 2001: 46). The roots of the trees held the ruins together and prevented their collapse.²⁵ By the early 19th century there is no longer any mention of the main *negorij* described by Backer in 1710. Presumably it was also deserted and its inhabitants moved to the Tanjung Pinang built by the Dutch. There was also no further mention of shipbuilding at Riau Lama and in fact the name Riau Lama was henceforth used for the former royal sanctuary. It seems likely that the *old* Riau Lama was also abandoned.

The Dutch created a new settlement, Tanjung Pinang proper, on the south bank of the river, several hundred metres downstream from the royal sanctuary, probably near the former boom. The location was determined by a Dutch fortress, already built on a hill top in 1785.²⁶ In the early 19th century, Tanjung Pinang consisted of some 20, neat European houses and a number of public buildings – a residency house, an infirmary, a magazine, a convict quarter, a school for European children and another for Chinese children – all constructed of brick and roofed with tiles. The majority of residents in the Chinese ward were Hokkiens ('Amoy Chinese'). Many of their houses were also built of brick and packed together. The poorer Chinese lived in huts on stilts and on rafts on the seashore. There was also a Chinese temple. Christian services were held in an ordinary wooden house until a church was built in 1835 with money from the European and Chinese residents and the viceroy. Next was a parade ground. Church and parade ground symbolised the Dutch (Christian, military) overlordship. Dutch power was visible in a more pragmatic form in Fort Kroonprins which lay behind the town on a hill overlooking the bay. It was built in 1824 with material from the former VOC fortress in Malacca. A jetty protruded 100 metres (110 yards) into the bay but it was still too shallow draught for most ships. In the mid-19th century Tanjung Pinang was one German mile (7,400 metres) long and half a German mile wide.²⁷

²⁴Rapport van stuurman Herke Backer over Riau, 2-8-1710 to 17-9-1710, VOC, ARA 1795, Malacca, p. 535–537; Rapport van Intje Aman over Riau [Report of Intje Aman on Riau], 2-8-1710 to 17-9-1710, ARA, VOC 1795, Malacca, 548.

²⁵M.G. Kenhardt [?], Beknopte aantekeningen van het eiland Bintang [Concise description of the island of Bintan], 1833, ANRI, Riau, pp. 75, 28.

²⁶GM 29-12-1787, ARA, VOC 3767, f. 653r; Winstedt 1932: 66.

²⁷Netscher 1854: 112, 160–62; van der Putten 2001: 42–44; M.G. Kenhardt [?], Beknopte aantekeningen van het eiland Bintang, 1833, ANRI, Riau 75, pp. 11–13.

Across the river was Senggarang, a second Chinese ward which had probably been observed by Backer in 1710. Senggarang was inhabited by Cantonese. Their kampung looked more disorderly than that of the Hokkiens. A constant flow of small boats crossed the bay between Tanjung Pinang and Senggarang (Nahuijs 1827: 225; Netscher 1854: 160; van der Putten 2001: 44, 51).

Considerable animosity existed between the two Chinese groups – Hokkiens and Cantonese.²⁸ The Hokkiens were permanent residents unlike many Cantonese who came to Riau to make money and return to China. Ch. van Angelbeek proposed a policy of urban development to encourage the Cantonese to settle. Under his plan the Cantonese were to move to the Dutch side of the bay. It was reasoned that if the leading merchants could be persuaded to move by offering them 20 newly built brick dwellings in Tanjung Pinang proper, the other Cantonese would automatically be forced to follow because of the tight social network.²⁹ However, nothing came of this early plan at urban social engineering.

Penyengat island located at the river mouth in the bay between Tanjung Pinang and Senggarang was also part of this composite town. Penyengat presumably refers to Pulau Bayan since there is no other island in the midst of the bay. It was also known as Mars. Penyengat was first settled in 1804 by the Bugis viceroy and his retinue. A mosque, several brick compounds and royal graves were built and a bathing area for women added to the residential grandeur. There were also three Malay and one Chinese (Hokkien) kampung on Penyengat (van der Putten 2001: 59–61).

Daik, the capital of the Sultan of Lingga, was in many ways a small replica of Tanjung Pinang. It was also situated on a creek which could be entered by ships at high tide. The *dalam* was situated on the right bank, half an hour upriver by rowing boat. The sultan's premises were large but unimpressive, consisting of a wooden house, a harem and a reception hall. One corner was protected by a bastion. Several kampung were located on both sides of the creek and Malays and Bugis lived side by side at Daik. The Malay houses had a neglected appearance. Some 300 Chinese lived in a separate kampung across the creek, near the mouth of the river. Only the Chinese temple at the end of the Chinese ward, was made of brick. At a distance of one hour and a half lay Bukit Cengkeh, a hill planted with clove trees as indicated by its name, where deceased sultans were buried in two buildings. Their graves were covered by a brick cupola, glass and tiles which were painted red and gold on the inside and had Arabic inscriptions decorating the walls. The graves were well maintained. The roads in Daik were in good condition, so that the sultan had fun with his carriages and horses. Near Daik, but perhaps as a separate settlement, lay the kampung Merawang, inhabited by Bangkanese migrants. In Merawang, houses on stilts stood in two rows with trees providing shade. A peculiarity was that the terrain between the two rows of houses, and even the ground under the houses, was swept. Unlike Tanjung Pinang, no Dutch settlement existed at Daik.³⁰

²⁸A similar animosity existed among indigenous residents from different *suku* (clans). If a person from one clan entered the territory of another clan, this undoubtedly resulted in a casualty (Nahuijs 1827: 229–30).

²⁹Ch. van Angelbeek, Rapport omtrent zijn zending naar Riouw [Report on his mission to Riau], 14-8-1825, ANRI, Riau 71–73, 115–18.

³⁰Netscher 1862: 242–244; D.L. Bäumgardt, Aanteekeningen gehouden gedurende eene reis van Riouw naar de eilanden Lingga, [. . .] Singkep [. . .] Indragiri [Notes kept on a voyage from Riau to the islands of Lingga, Singkep and Indragiri], 13-11-1849, ANRI, Riau pp. 61–62; A.L. Weddik, Korte geschiedenis van Riouw en Lingga, n.d. [Concise history of Riau and Lingga], ANRI, Riau pp. 73–15.

The Sultan of Lingga had spectacular ideas for a new capital at the foot of the twin-peaked mountain ('the rabbit ears') in central Lingga and his palace was designed in Singapore. The ground floor was to hold living quarters and a reception space, whilst the first floor would be wholly reserved for his harem. The palace was to form the centre of a town containing only brick houses for some 3,000 to 4,000 inhabitants. The town was to be protected by a fortress, a triple wall with gates, trenches and a moat. The environs were to be used for agriculture. The cost of the project was estimated at half a million Straits dollars. But after three years the palace had yet to be completed. When the Dutch Resident A.L. Bäumgardt visited Lingga, four Chinese labourers were working on the palace but they were regularly idle for weeks for want of salary and building materials.³¹ Although nothing ever came of the project, merely the plan to create such a town is unique in Sumatran urbanism.

Villages

The central Sumatran villages, like the towns, showed certain spatial patterns. Little is known about the villages on the west coast which stood on stilts (Müller and Horner 1855: 41, 61, 89) and were commonly built in two parallel rows. Bengkulu villages were surrounded by old fruit trees that were considered deities (Raffles 1830: 303). The most populous villages were in the highlands. The main villages in the Minangkabau highlands were called *kota*.³² The upriver and downriver ends of the *kota* were indicated as head (*kepala kota*) and tail (*ikur kota*) (Verkerk Pistorius 1871: 24). The houses were raised on stilts almost two metres (six feet) high. Wooden houses had high-pitched roofs with eaves ornamented with carving. The carving of the gable ends and the posts was sometimes very elaborate. The houses were spread unevenly through the village and were built in compounds with abundant coconut palms and other fruit trees so that from a distance a village looked like a collection of palm trees. The ground between the houses was flat and often clean swept. But there was a stench from the mud holes beneath the houses as refuse and liquid waste were poured through the bamboo floor above. In front of the houses were one or more rice barns. One exceptionally prosperous village leader had 25 barns in his yard (van Hasselt 1882: 141–42, 145; Verkerk Pistorius 1871: 86; Wallace 1869: 135–36).

As most villages were built on hilly terrain intersected by rivers, there was actually little regularity in the layout of Minangkabau villages (van Hasselt 1882: 142–43). However, several public buildings were found in these villages. A meeting house (*balai*) was found in the village square and looked like a house with open sides. A mosque was found in the large villages and many smaller ones as well. Mosques were also situated in the square. Other elements of the square were a *waringin* or a *kubang* tree and a stone block in which women hulled their rice. The square was, naturally, a meeting place, a place for children to play and perhaps a weekly market. At or near the market was usually a *lapau* (shop annex cafe). It was recognisable by the bunch of bananas hanging on a hook in the open shutter.

Near the house of village leaders was a small building to shelter the *tabuh*, a large drum to call the villagers in case of danger or for a meeting (van Hasselt 1882: 142).

³¹D.L. Bäumgardt, Aanteekeningen gehouden gedurende eene reis van Riouw naar de eilanden Lingga, [...]. Singkep [...]. Indragiri, 13-11-1849, ANRI, Riau pp. 61–62.

³²With *nagari*, one meant the *kota*, outlying settlements (*taratak*) and the rest of the territory.

It is possible that the *tabuh* was not used before colonial interference with village administration in the 19th century. One element of villages that disappeared because of the Pax Neerlandica was defence. Defence works consisted of a moat and a wall planted with thorny bamboo. A tree trunk served as a bridge to cross the moat; halfway across the tree was a standing plank to keep goats out of the village (van Hasselt 1882:144). One or more graveyards were located near the village but the dead could also be buried in a corner of a yard (van Hasselt 1882: 144).

Villages situated along the Batanghari and Musi had a different layout to those in the highlands. These villages had an elongated form made up of two or more closely built rows of houses. The rows ran parallel to the river, so that each house had easy access to the river. Only coconut palms were found here. Unlike the Minangkabau houses these were roofed with tiles, perhaps to reduce the risk of fire spreading to adjacent houses. Villages had between 10 and 80 houses. There was at least one public raft in front of the houses which served as a bathing place, washing place and point of embarkation. Stairs lead from this raft to the top of the levee. The *balai* was found on the riverbank at the point where the stairs led up to the bank. If there was no meeting hall, the stairs ended at the house of the village head. All houses had a rice barn and some houses had a shed for goats built over the river. Mosques were rare and *surau* (small prayer houses) absent here (van Hasselt 1882: 141, 145–47). In the lowland villages, where the levees were low and often flooded, a *nibung* planking usually linked the houses. Most of these settlements had both Malay and Chinese residents. Examples are Kota Baru (Reteh), Bukit Batu (Siak), and Bengkalis, which had between 20 and 90 houses. The presence of a mosque is reported only for Kota Baru. At Bukit Batu lived one of the lords of Siak, the *laksamana*. His house was at the edge of the village, near the meeting hall (Netscher 1862: 253, 360, 363–64).

In Lebong valley the village houses stood around a square within which were a meeting hall and coconut palms. The meeting hall was decorated with coarse carvings of people, trees, animals and boats. A hollow beam of the meeting hall functioned as a drum and a public hulling block was placed under the lean-to roof of the meeting hall. Rice barns and goat sheds were found in Lebong too (van Hasselt 1882: 141, 148).

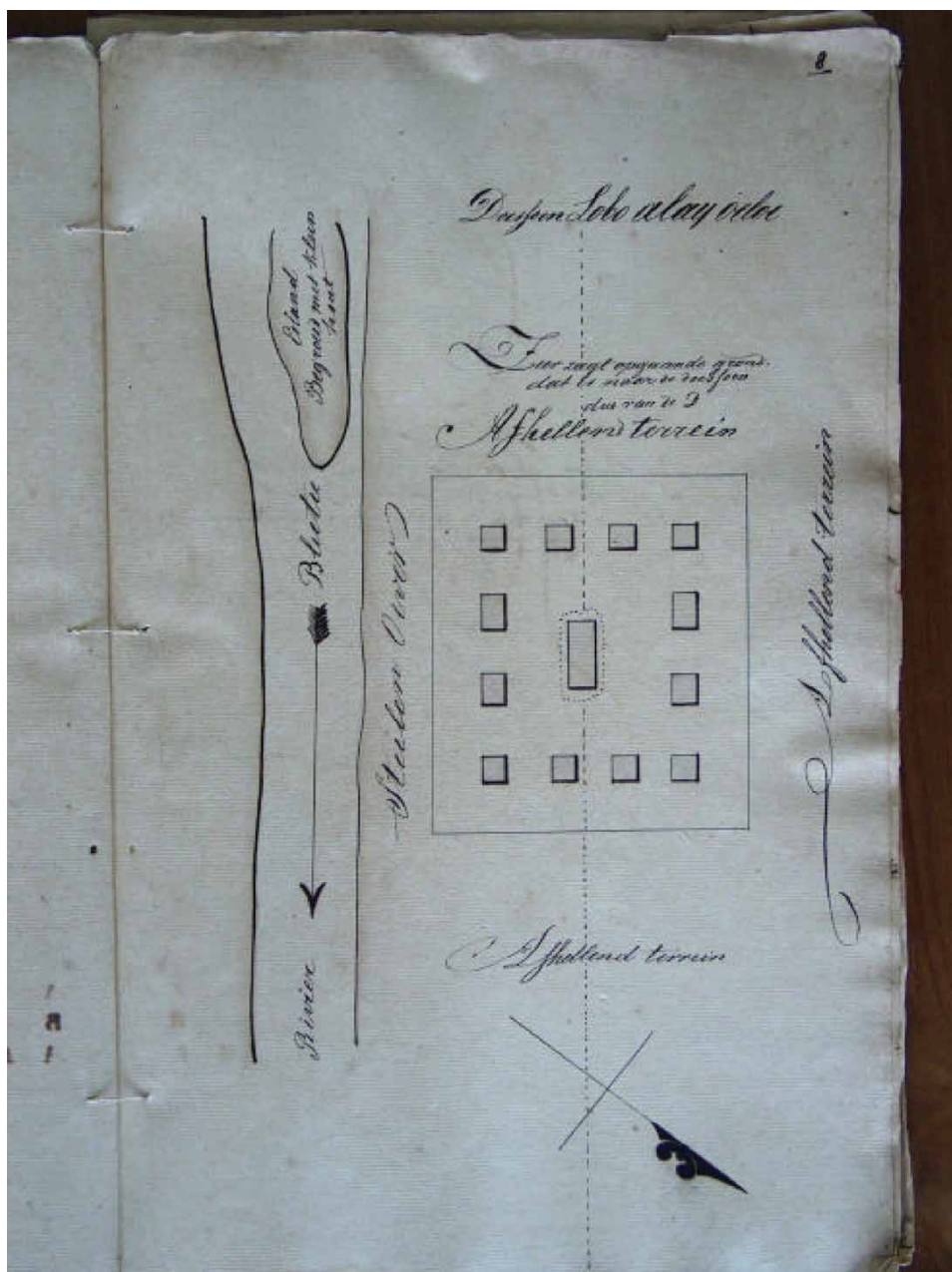
A unique set of sketches of 16 villages provides more information about the Musi/Batanghari and the Lebong type of village. The sketches were drawn by J.M. Joukes during a trip from Palembang to Bengkulu in 1839. The villages were selected for their potential to build fortifications. As far as the position of the villages could be determined, all drawings were made at sites along the upper reaches of the river Musi and the river Bengkulu and their respective tributaries. Details vary in each drawing depending on the hostility of local residents and the time available to Joukes for his drawings. As far as I know, similar sketches of Sumatran villages have not been previously published and four of them are presented here.³³ Six conclusions can be drawn about the full set of 16 villages.

Firstly, the two types of village layout – Musi type and Lebong type – were apparently found close to each other. The distinction between the two types was less of a geographical differentiation than A.L. van Hasselt would have us believe. This conclusion certainly applies to the villages on the Musi side of the Barisan Range and perhaps to those on the Bengkulu side as well, although the drawings are less conclusive in this respect.

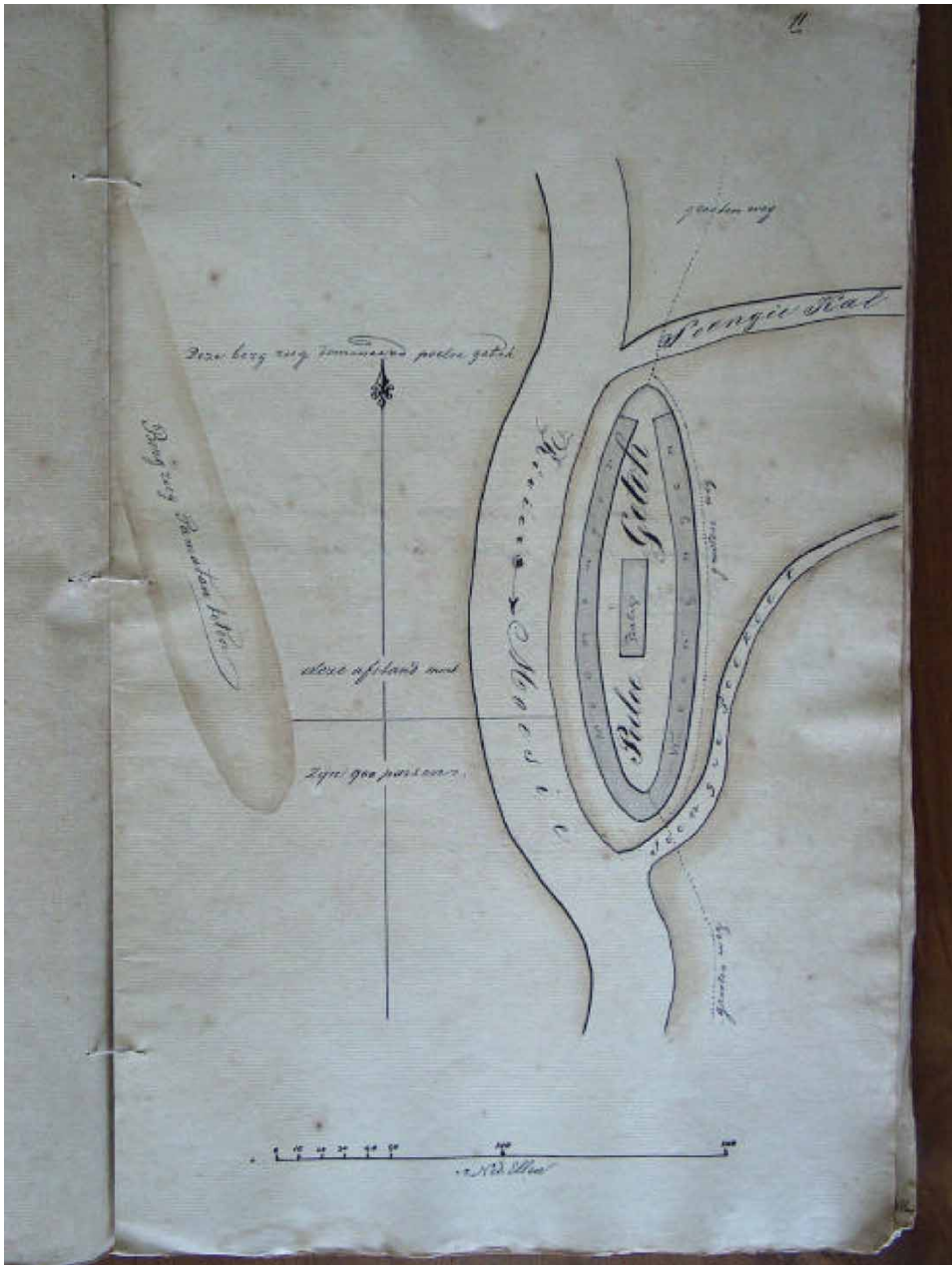
³³J.M. Joukes, *Schetsen van gronden welke tot het aanleggen van sterkten geschikt zijn* [Sketches of terrain suitable for the construction of strongholds], ANRI, Palembang, pp. 71–78.

The village of Lubuk Alai Hulu (Map 1), for example, was a classical Lebong village type but was situated along the river Beliti.

Secondly, there were variations around the standard types. The two rows of houses seen in the village of Pulau Getah (Map 2), for example, were not parallel but had a

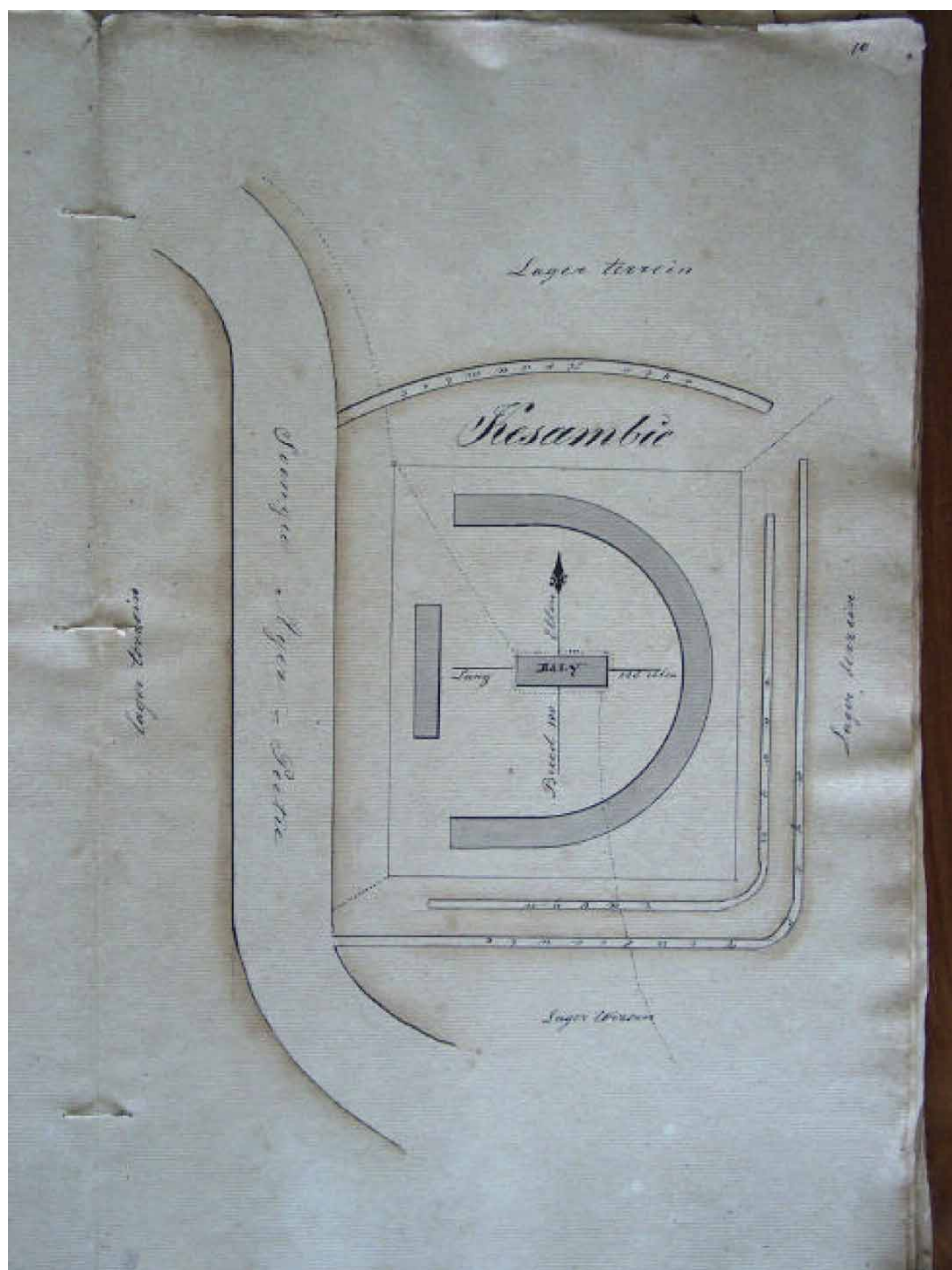


Map 1. Sketch of the village of Lubuk Alai Hulu in 1839 by J.M. Joukes. Courtesy of the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia



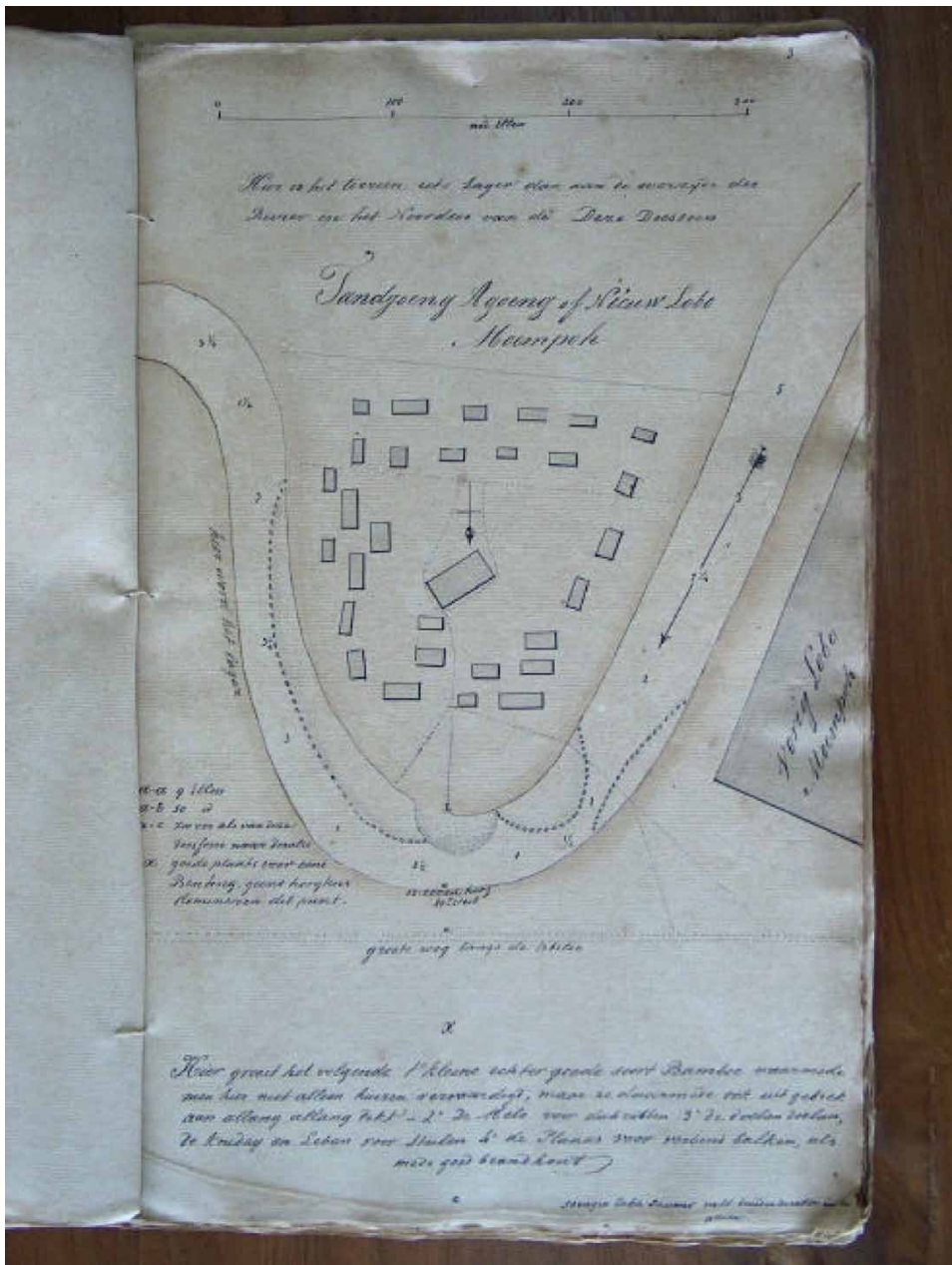
Map 2. Sketch of the village of Pulau Getah in 1839 by J.M. Joukes. Courtesy of the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia

long elliptical form. The centre of this elliptical space was left open for the *balai*. Kesambi village (Map 3) was of the Lebong type but with one circular side. The village of Lubuk Mumpoh Baru (Map 4) showed a hybrid form: most houses stood in a double row but the general shape was undeniably a square.



Map 3. Sketch of the village of Kesambi in 1839 by J.M. Joukes. Courtesy of the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia

Thirdly, meeting halls rather than mosques were the centre of the community. Other structures were placed at right angles to the centrally placed meetings halls (see Maps 1–3). Of the seven villages that are shown with individual buildings, only Lubuk Mumpoh Baru may have had a mosque. Unlike the other villages, the central building



Map 4. Sketch of the village of Lubuk Mumpoh Baru or Tanjung Agung in 1839 by J.M. Joukes. Courtesy of the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia

here is placed at a conspicuously oblique angle to the houses (and to the river). This suggests an orientation towards the *qiblah*, that is, Mecca. A few villages had neither a meeting hall nor a mosque. This conclusion is important because it demonstrates that Islamic architecture only played a role in the major towns. It confirms the connection

between ruler and Islamic architecture, with architecture used for the legitimisation of the ruler.

Fourthly, it comes as no surprise that many villages were situated at the confluence of a main river and its tributary or at fords across rivers. More remarkable is the fact that most rivers had paths along their banks. The presence of these paths seems strange since Alfred Wallace remarked that ‘the natives are [...] never going anywhere on foot if they can reach the place in a boat’ (Wallace 1869: 133). It is not clear at present whether these paths connected neighbouring settlements or simply connected the village with gardens on its outskirts. The so-called great road, indicated on several of the original maps (see Maps 2 and 4), served an inter-village purpose.

Fifthly, the backs of several villages including Kesambi (Map 3), were protected by either a small river or ravine, and sometimes by both. However, the difference in height between the riverbanks was apparently not a strategic consideration. Riverbanks were usually of unequal height and villages were just as often on the higher as on the lower bank.

Sixthly, villages regularly moved. The reasons are often unclear though in one case, that of Dusun Merantau, the cause recorded was the regular flooding of the village as it was too close to the river. The village was therefore moved further back to more elevated terrain although productive fruit trees remained at the original village site.

Conclusions

In this article I have tried to analyse the way political leaders in Sumatra gave shape to towns. The urban form and particular buildings, as well as some architectural details, helped to express the ruler’s power in a symbolic way. With the rise of Islamic rulers new elements were introduced in the urban form. Later the demise of Muslim rule and the rise of European colonial power changed the layout of cities again. Urban form was not only determined by ideological considerations but also by the practicalities of local geography. In this respect, it proved useful to distinguish between towns and villages on the west coast, in the highlands, along the eastern rivers and on the islands off the east coast of Sumatra. Several conclusions can be drawn about urban form, the impact Islam made on the towns and the indigenous perception of the difference between town and village.

Perhaps the most surprising finding was that all the large towns were composite towns. Palembang consisted of a *hulu* side, a *hilir* side, downstream Lamabang, and upstream Bukit Seguntang. Jambi was divided into a *hulu* and *hilir* side and a royal graveyard. Tanjung Pinang consisted of the Dutch town, Senggarang, Riau Lama, and Penyengat. Daik spanned both sides of the river with a Chinese ward and a royal graveyard as outposts. Even Padang, which was predominantly a European creation, followed the composite model and was situated on both banks of the river Arau with an outpost at Pulau Pisang.³⁴ The composite character of the settlement appears to be the main morphological difference between town and village. Villages were concentrated in one place.³⁵

³⁴Only Muntok which acquired its urban appearance through British intervention, did not have a composite layout but did at least have clearly distinguishable parts (warehouses, Chinese ward, market, European administrative centre and fortress) within the town.

³⁵It is interesting that in the Minangkabau highlands, a ‘townless’ region, the villages (*nagari*) also had a composite character with a core (*kota*) and fringe settlements (*taratak*). This shows that the large Minangkabau villages functioned to some extent as towns. The difference between Palembang, Jambi, Tanjung Pinang, Daik and Padang on the one hand and the Minangkabau villages on the other was that the urban parts each had a specialised function whereas the outposts of the Minangkabau villages were more like young offshoots, or replicas, of the core village.

In all cases, without exception, the connection between the parts was maintained by boats. This demonstrates the dominance of water transport in pre-industrial times.

The flow of water was also important in the perception of urban space. The upstream-downstream distinction played a role on the big rivers of eastern Sumatra (Palembang and Jambi) and on the small creeks of the islands in the Malacca Straits (Riau and Daik). Concepts of purity going back to Hindu-Buddhist times, together with practical sanitary considerations, as well as military strategy, placed the sultan's palace at the upstream end of the town. After a Dutch fortress blocked the entrance to the royal palace in Riau, the viceroy moved out into the sea to Penyengat island, again a site that could not be defiled symbolically by other people in town. Flowing water obviously also structured the layout of villages in that there was a difference between the waterside (river or sea) and landside of the villages. The upstream-downstream contrast, however, did not play a role in the villages.³⁶

Related to the previous point is the fact that Muslim rulers in Sumatra used water as a barrier between themselves and non-Muslim strangers. Arabs, also foreigners but fellow-believers, were permitted to settle near the royal palace. When a sultan was in active rule, he ordered Europeans and Chinese to live on the other side of the river from his palace or to stay on rafts on the river. The sultan did not have a preference for the left or right bank, as long as the river separated him from the 'infidels'. After the ruler lost his sovereignty to colonial powers, he still manoeuvred to keep a distance between himself and Europeans. Penyengat in Riau and the move of the Jambi sultan to the other side of the Batanghari are examples of this manoeuvring to maintain a symbolic distance from non-Muslim settlements.

The construction of mosques was the most important change in urban form introduced after the rise of Islamic states. The presence of a mosque is a second criterion, albeit not absolute, to distinguish towns from villages.³⁷ The appearance of mosques was important, they obviously did not previously exist, but now secured the location of the cities. With the rare exception of Muara Takus, the monumental buildings typical of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia and Java (Day and Reynolds 2000: 3–7; Kulke 1993: 286–89) were absent from the east coast. Most buildings in Sumatra were constructed in perishable materials and could not sustain royal power for long. Therefore the most important material symbols of royal power were portable metal regalia such as jewellery or daggers (Gullick 1988: 45–46; Wheatley 1983: 243). Not being 'anchored' by monumental buildings, cities were easily abandoned or moved (Reid 1993: 77–90). Palembang in 1659 and Riau in 1784 are relatively recent examples of such moves. Thus the construction of mosques was a major rupture in the traditional urban form of Sumatra as from then on, cities were anchored to the mosque. For example, the mosque of Palembang, built in about 1740, is today still the centre of the city.

Mosques were thus important from an urban-morphological perspective even if they were apparently less meaningful in the religious life of the Sumatrans. The mosques of Jambi and Palembang were neglected and, ironically, it was the Dutch who pressed the local population to repair them. The royal graves, in contrast, were well maintained. Examples include the two burial sites in Palembang, and those in Jambi, Padang, Tanjung Pinang and Daik. The veneration of royal graves is a good example of how

³⁶Again, Minangkabau villages were exceptional in that they differentiated between the head and tail end of the village.

³⁷Again, the Minangkabau highlands were an exception in this respect.

Islam added to the legitimacy of rulers but did not replace Hindu-Buddhist notions of sacred kingship. Royal graves were, I believe, a more powerful object for legitimising kingship than mosques as graves were a personal symbol of royal power whereas mosques, in principle, served the whole *ummah*. Moreover, royal graves may expand on the old worship of temples for Hindu-Buddhist gods/incarnated kings. Another centre of royal power, not explicitly Islamic, was, of course, the *kraton*.

The new European overlords had their own symbolic means of expressing power. One method was to build a fortress on the spot of the former *kraton*. The exact site of the former dynastic power underscored the fact that the Europeans were taking over from the sultan. The other method was to erect statues, namely those of Raaff in Padang and Parr in Bengkulu.

The main morphological differences between town and village in the mind of the Sumatrans were: whether or not a place was a composite settlement, the presence of a mosque, royal graves and *kraton*, and the meaningful distinction between upstream and downstream. Minangkabau *nagari* took an intermediate position between town and village.

Finally, I would like to give some attention to the anonymous Sultan of Lingga who developed plans for a new capital that was simultaneously both grandiose and grotesque. In my opinion he stands out as a great urban planner of the 1840s. What is interesting about his urban concept was that his capital was not a Muslim town but a modernist project. Not a mosque but a two-storey palace formed the heart of the city. Planks, mats, bamboo and leaves were banned and everything had to be built in brick. A fortress, a very un-Indonesian element, added to the modernity of the project. His idea foreshadowed 20th-century developments when modernity would prove to have a more powerful impact on towns than Islam ever did. Nevertheless, Islam has to this day left omnipresent traces on urban form in Sumatra.

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